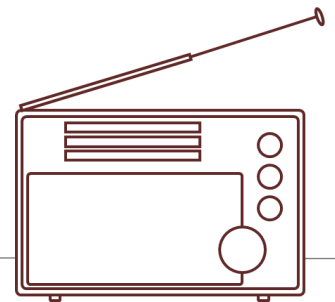
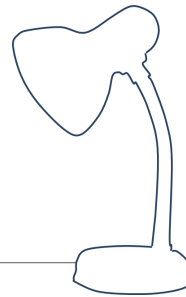
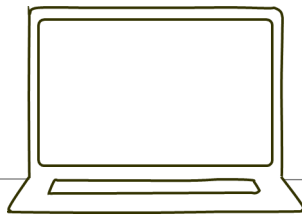
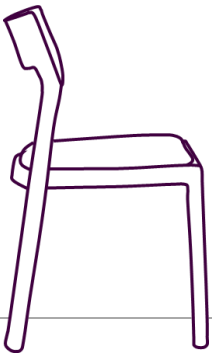


# THE SINGLE HOMELESSNESS SERVICE

Helping you find a place to live



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For any queries regarding the service, contact Townhall Lettings:

01223 457870

[townhall.lettings@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:townhall.lettings@cambridge.gov.uk)

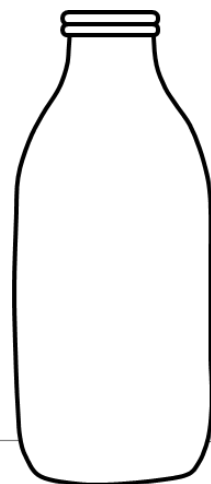
## Introduction

You've been given this booklet because you have been referred to the Single Homelessness Service.

Our overall aim is to help you find suitable, stable accommodation. This leaflet outlines what we will do to help you, what we expect you to do to help yourself, and some of the main accommodation options that are available to people accessing this service.

The Single Homelessness Service (SHS) was launched in the autumn of 2013. Since then, it has helped over 500 homeless people into accommodation across Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk.

The SHS now exists as a partnership between Cambridge City Council, Huntingdonshire District Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.



## Am I suitable for the SHS?

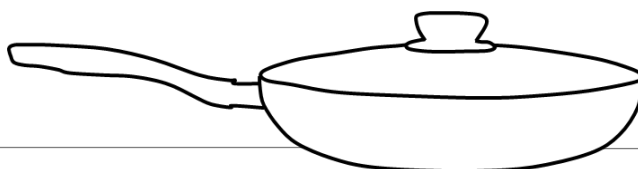
To qualify for the SHS, you need to:

- be single and aged 18 or over
- be homeless (or likely to lose your home) and either rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping
- not be in 'priority need' for re-housing (ask a housing adviser to explain this)
- have a ['local connection'](#) to Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire or Huntingdonshire.
- be either claiming state benefits or able to claim benefits (so, you could be in work at present). If you're unsure about this, we can talk about it when you come to see us.

**You should have what we call 'low support needs'**, meaning you should be able to manage your tenancy (e.g. pay rent and bills, look after the property, get on with others) without long-term help.

**Crucially, you should be willing to share accommodation with others.** We appreciate that this might not be ideal for you; however, affordable self-contained accommodation in the Cambridge area is very difficult to obtain.

We will provide you with help on the understanding that you would be prepared to share with others if necessary, at least in the short-term.



## What you can expect from us

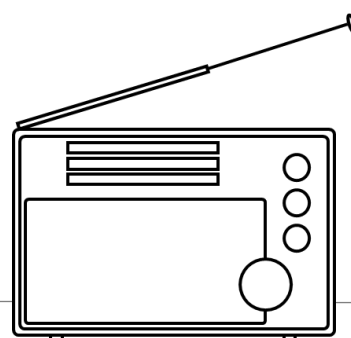
### Initial Interview

Once you've been referred to the SHS, you will meet a member of our team to discuss the options available to find you somewhere to live. We will have been provided with some details about your case by the person who referred you to the service, but we may go over these details with you and ask for further information if we need to.

The bulk of the interview will be taken up discussing the possible options available to you in your circumstances. These options will depend on:

- your age;
- your income;
- whether you have a 'local connection' to Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire and/or Huntingdonshire;
- your ability to travel to/from work and/or other essential commitments;
- your level of support needs;
- the accommodation available to us at the time of interview.

We'll work with you to help you decide the best *possible* options in your circumstances. It's important at this stage to be realistic: your ideal option may well be a one-bedroomed property in Cambridge, but this may well be unaffordable or unavailable.



We will also discuss whether there are any issues that need to be addressed in order for you to find accommodation and make it a success (such as unpaid debts). We will signpost or refer you to appropriate support services.

At the end of the interview, we will confirm:

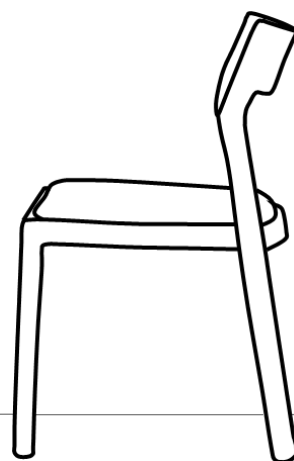
- the accommodation option(s) you would like to pursue;
- the actions we will take; and
- the actions you will take.

### **What if I'm not eligible?**

In some cases, it might become clear during the course of helping you that you are ineligible for our service. This might be because:

- your support needs are too high;
- you have no “local connection” to any of the local authorities supported by the SHS

If you are ineligible for our support, we may refer you back to your local authority / support agency for further help. Alternatively, we may provide you with an “advice only” service – explaining to you some of the options that may still be available to you in your situation.



## After the interview

Our aim is to help you take steps to secure suitable accommodation to resolve your housing situation.

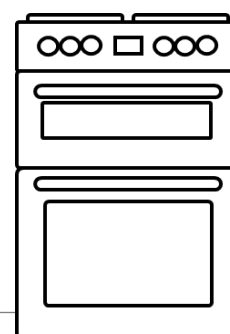
We will provide you with a clear, achievable list of steps you need to take to find somewhere to live. We will discuss these at your interview and, where relevant, will share these steps with the housing adviser who referred you. We'll write these steps on the "action plan" form at the back of this booklet.

We will contact you regularly while you look for accommodation, to see how you are getting on and to see if there is anything additional we can do to help you. We will also keep in contact with the local authority / support agency who referred you, so that they are aware of the progress of your case.

If we are assisting you into supported accommodation (see p.10-18) we will make a referral on your behalf, and will contact the accommodation provider regularly to see how your case is progressing.

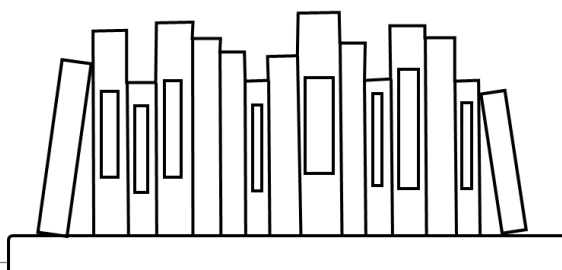
If we are assisting you into [Townhall Lettings](#) or [Supported Lodgings](#) accommodation, we will arrange an initial viewing for you and will help you plan your move.

We would expect to assist you for no more than three months, by which point we'd expect you to be able to manage your tenancy independently.



## What we expect from you

- **Take action.** The steps we ask you to take should be manageable for you in the timescales we set. Finding accommodation is not easy, but with perseverance it is definitely possible.
- **Try to stay positive** even if your initial attempts to find accommodation are unsuccessful. And please do contact us if you are struggling for whatever reason.
- **Keep in contact.** Sadly, we have to close a large number of cases because people do not respond to phone calls or texts. If we call you and can't get through, we will leave a voicemail, send a text message or send an email to tell you we've called and to ask you to get back in contact with us. If we make three attempts to contact you (on separate days) and cannot get through, we will close your case.
- **Tell us if your circumstances change.** If you change your phone number or email address, please tell us. If you manage to find accommodation, please contact us to let us know. This information helps us demonstrate the effectiveness of the SHS (and helps us secure funding to enable the service to continue).

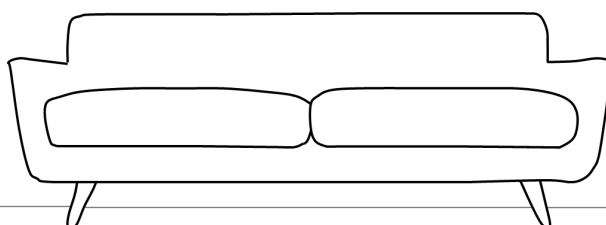




## ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

The next few pages describe some of the accommodation options that may be available to you. Please note the following:

- **This is not an exhaustive list.** We've helped place people into all sorts of accommodation, so long as it's affordable, sustainable and safe. If you have an idea of somewhere you'd like to try to move, discuss it with us
- **Not all of these options will be available.** For instance, there aren't always vacancies in Supported Lodgings and Townhall Lettings properties.
- **You should keep your options as open as you can.** If there are two or three possible options available to you, it's worth pursuing all of them.
- **Friends and family** might be able to provide you with somewhere to live, even if it's for a few months. If you do end up living with a friend or relative, you should come to an arrangement to pay something each week towards your stay. You should also use the time to make plans for finding somewhere longer-term to live. We can help you with this.



## TOWNHALL LETTINGS

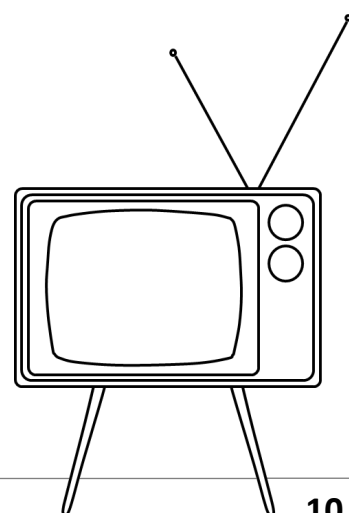
**Location:** various across Cambridge and the surrounding districts.

**Description:** a number of privately-owned shared houses, ranging from 2-beds to 5-beds. The properties are managed by [Townhall Lettings](#), Cambridge City Council's social lettings agency.

**Eligibility:** you need to be over 18 and have low support needs. You do not need to be in work but we'd encourage you to find work once you move in.

**Rent:** variable but typically on or slightly above the Local Housing Allowance rate for the area, plus bills.

**Particularly suitable if:** you have a recent proven track record of being able to maintain a tenancy (pay your bills, get on with others and so on) and are happy to share with others.



## THE ACCESS SCHEME (Cambridge City Council)

**Location:** anywhere in the country.

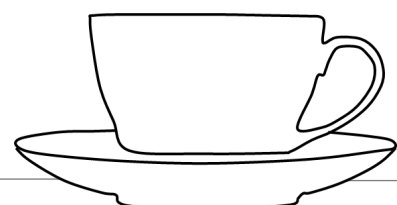
**Description:** the [Townhall Lettings Access Scheme](#) assists with the cost of moving into privately-rented accommodation. It can provide an interest-free loan to cover the rent deposit and (if necessary) the first month's rent.

**Eligibility:** you need to be homeless (or threatened with homelessness) and have a local connection to Cambridge City Council.

**Rent:** variable, though the scheme can only help if the property is affordable to you – typically, the rent should be no more than 40% of your income.

**Particularly suitable if:** you are in work and willing to spend some time looking around independently for privately-rented property. Also ideal if you are looking to move out of the area.

**NOTE:** Similar schemes are available if you have a local connection to another local authority. [The King Street Housing Society scheme](#) provides the landlord with a written guarantee against rent and/or damage to the property, instead of a rent deposit. This scheme is available if you have a local connection to South Cambridgeshire District Council. [The Huntingdonshire District Council scheme](#) provides loans for rent deposit and rent in advance, so long as you're prepared to move within Huntingdonshire district.



## PRIVATE RENT – What to look for

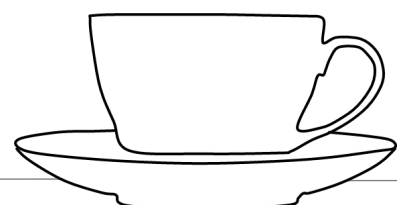
**Agencies:** Some agencies have worked regularly with us in the past. These include [Alexander Greens](#), [Cambs Property Bureau](#) and [Anglia Accommodation Services](#). Other agencies may be willing to work with you, but there are also some who will not work with you if you need help from the council with your rent deposit.

**Agency fees** vary and can be expensive at times. Letting agents usually carry out credit checks and ask for references, so it may be worth being up-front if you have a poor credit history.

**Property websites:** you may be able to rent a room directly from a landlord using websites such as [gumtree](#), [spareroom](#), [easyroommate](#) or [roombuddies](#). It can be a lot easier to negotiate directly with landlords on these sites, and ‘sell yourself’ if you have had housing issues in the past.

However, you should also be aware of potential scams on property websites. If it looks too good to be true, it probably is!

[The Government’s “How To Rent” booklet](#) provides further advice on what to look for when renting privately.



## SUPPORTED LODGINGS

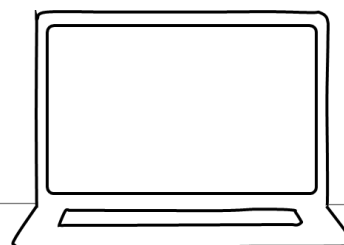
**Location:** various across Cambridge and the surrounding districts.

**Description:** [the Supported Lodgings Scheme](#) matches you with someone who has a spare room in their property and wants to let it out. A lodgings arrangement can be a low-cost way of accessing stable accommodation within an established home.

**Eligibility:** you need to be over 18 and have low support needs. You do not need to be in work but we'd encourage you to find work once you move in.

**Rent:** variable but typically slightly above the Local Housing Allowance rate for the area. Bills are usually included.

**Particularly suitable if:** you are happy to live in an existing family home and share with others.



## HOPE INTO ACTION

**Location:** Various locations in Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Council.

**Description:** a number of privately-owned shared houses, ranging from 2-beds to 4-beds. Properties tend to be all-male or all-female. The properties are managed by [Hope into Action](#), a faith-based housing charity.

**Eligibility:** you may have some support needs but these need to be managed. For example, if you have had substance misuse issues in the past, you should be engaged with Inclusion or a similar treatment service. You should be willing to share with others.

**Rent:** variable but typically slightly above the Local Housing Allowance rate for the area. Bills are usually included.

**Particularly suitable if:** you need a first privately-rented tenancy after a period of homelessness.



## PARK HOMES

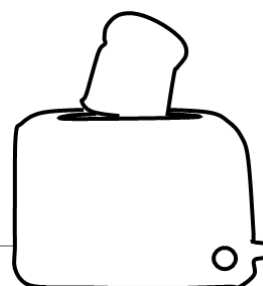
**Location:** various across South Cambridgeshire.

**Description:** self-contained chalet-type accommodation at various park home sites.

**Eligibility:** you should be able to manage your own tenancy; any support needs you have should be managed (with help from support agencies if necessary). You do not need to be in work.

**Rent:** varies, but in most cases you should be able to claim full housing benefit if you are not in work.

**Particularly suitable if:** you particularly need self-contained accommodation close to Cambridge City, and cannot afford a conventional privately-rented property.



## THE SPRINGS

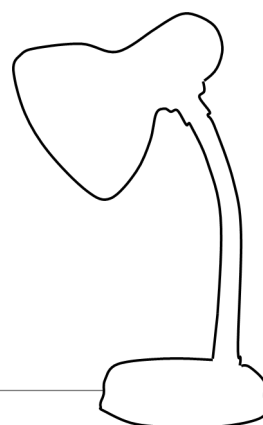
**Location:** Cambridge City.

**Description:** [The Springs](#) comprises six four-bed flats, located a short distance from Cambridge City Centre and managed by Riverside Housing.

**Eligibility:** To qualify, you need to be 18-65, homeless with low support needs and have a local connection to the Cambridgeshire area. As part of your stay, you will be expected to engage in at least 14 hours' 'meaningful activity' per week, such as education, training or employment (paid or voluntary).

**Rent:** Current rents are around £700 per month. If you are out of work, you may be entitled to housing benefit, which will cover all but a £10 weekly service charge fee. If you find work whilst in The Springs, we can help you move into privately-rented accommodation, which may be cheaper for you.

**Particularly suitable if:** you are looking to get back into work after a period of illness or unemployment.





## YOUTH ACCOMMODATION FORUM (YAF) REFERRALS

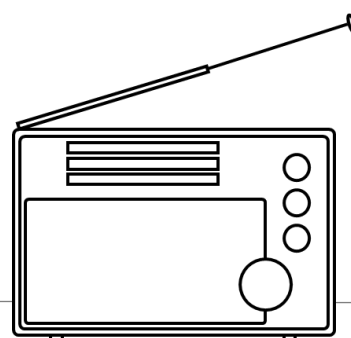
**Location:** Various across Cambridge City.

**Description:** there are various hostels and supported accommodation providers that specialise in providing accommodation to under-25s. These hostels can be accessed through a Youth Accommodation Forum (YAF) referral, which we can arrange.

**Eligibility:** each provider has their own eligibility criteria: some are female-only; some specialise in helping people with ongoing mental health issues; some insist on an “engagement contract” where you agree to take part on education, training or employment as a condition of your stay.

**Rent:** varies. Rents can be expensive if you end up finding work (and cannot claim Housing Benefit), but you may be able to move on with the help of one of the rent deposit schemes previously mentioned.

**Particularly suitable if:** you are under-25, not working at present and willing to share with others.



## HOMELINK

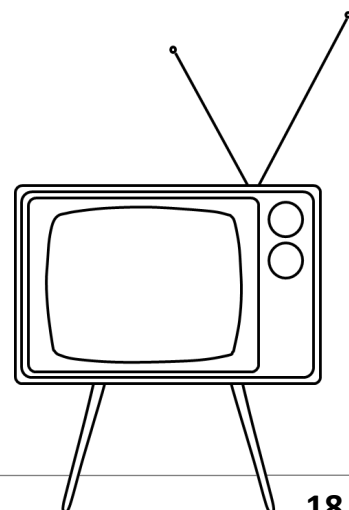
**Location:** various across Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk

**Description:** [Homelink](#) is the system used to help you access council or housing association accommodation. Properties are typically self-contained and marketed at “affordable” rents. There is an extremely high demand for properties through Homelink.

**Eligibility:** Anyone with a local connection to one of the districts included in the Homelink partnership. You will be given a priority “banding” based on your current circumstances and can bid on available properties on a fortnightly basis.

**Rent:** varies

**Particularly suitable if:** you treat Homelink as an additional option for finding accommodation (and keep pursuing one or more of the other options previously listed).



## USEFUL CONTACTS

### **Cambridge & District Citizens Advice**

[www.cambridgecab.org.uk/](http://www.cambridgecab.org.uk/)

0344 848 7979

### **Stepchange Debt Charity**

[www.stepchange.org/](http://www.stepchange.org/)

0800 138 1111

### **Eastern Savings and Loans Credit Union**

[www.eslcu.co.uk/Home/](http://www.eslcu.co.uk/Home/)

### **CPFT (NHS mental health, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough)**

<http://www.cpft.nhs.uk/>

0300 300 0055

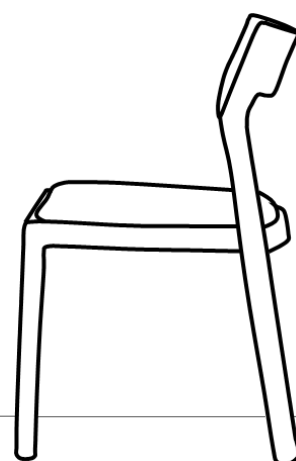
### **Shelter**

[www.shelter.org.uk/](http://www.shelter.org.uk/)

0808 800 4444

### **Gov.uk – How To Rent**

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-rent](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-rent)



**ACTION PLAN**

**Actions to be taken by Single Homelessness Service**

Action	By (Date)	Completed?

**Actions to be taken by you**

Action	By (Date)	Completed?